



The American College of  
Obstetricians and Gynecologists  
WOMEN'S HEALTH CARE PHYSICIANS



Society for  
Maternal-Fetal Medicine

## Flu Shot for Pregnant Patients: Frequently Asked Questions

### **I am pregnant. Is it recommended to receive the inactivated influenza vaccine (flu shot)?**

Yes. Flu shots are an effective and safe way to protect you and your baby from serious illness and complications of the flu. The flu shot given during pregnancy helps protect infants younger than 6 months who are too young to be vaccinated and have no other way of receiving influenza antibodies. The flu shot has been given to millions of pregnant women over many years, and flu shots have been shown to be safe for pregnant women and their babies.

### **During which trimester is it safe to have a flu shot?**

The flu shot is recommended for pregnant women and can be given at any time during pregnancy. Pregnant women are advised to get vaccinated as soon as possible and to speak to their health care providers about being immunized.

### **Which flu vaccine should pregnant women receive?**

Pregnant women should receive the flu shot, which is given with a needle, usually in the arm. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (the College) recommend that pregnant women should receive this vaccine.

### **Will the flu shot give me the flu?**

No. You cannot get the flu from receiving the flu vaccine.

### **Is there a flu vaccine that pregnant women should not receive?**

Yes. Pregnant women should not receive the nasal spray vaccine, which is made with the live flu virus. The nasal spray vaccine is safe for women after they have given birth, even if they are breastfeeding, and for family members.

### **Are preservatives in influenza vaccines safe for my baby?**

Yes. The type of preservative (eg, thimerosal) used in trace amounts in some vaccines has not been shown to be harmful to a pregnant woman or her baby. Some women may be concerned about exposure to preservatives during pregnancy. Single-dose influenza

*(see reverse)*

vaccines that contain a mercury-free preservative are available through some manufactures. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the College recommend that pregnant women may receive the inactivated influenza vaccine with or without thimerosal.

### **What else can I do to protect my baby against the flu?**

Getting your flu shot is the most important step in protecting yourself and your baby against the flu. In addition, breastfeeding your baby and making sure other family members and caregivers receive the flu vaccine will further protect your baby.

### **I am breastfeeding my baby. Is it safe to get vaccinated?**

Yes. Influenza vaccines can be given to breastfeeding mothers if they were not immunized when they were pregnant. Breastfeeding women can receive either the flu shot or the nasal spray. Breastfeeding mothers pass antibodies through breast milk, which may also reduce the infant's chances of getting sick with the flu.

## **RESOURCES**

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. Seasonal influenza (flu) for ob-gyns. Available at: [http://www.immunizationforwomen.org/immunization\\_facts/seasonal\\_influenza](http://www.immunizationforwomen.org/immunization_facts/seasonal_influenza). Retrieved April 1, 2013.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Pregnant women and influenza (flu). Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/pregnant.htm>. Retrieved April 1, 2013.

Department of Health and Human Services. Pregnant women at risk for the flu. Available at: <http://www.flu.gov/at-risk/pregnant/index.html>. Retrieved April 1, 2013.

This information is designed to aid practitioners in assessing their patients' immunization needs. This guidance should not be construed as dictating an exclusive course of treatment or procedure. Variations in practice may be warranted based on the needs of the individual patient, resources, and limitations unique to the institution or type of practice. Please be advised that this guidance may become out-of-date as new information becomes available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.